

# Engineering a safe, compliant and modern passenger experience

August 17, 2021



*Railbusinessdaily has caught up with [Spencer Group's](#) specialist M&E team to talk about its work in the industry.*

Imagine a life without power, engines, escalators, lifts or even heating and air conditioning. For most of us, these things are just there, and we don't even think about them, unless something goes wrong or they need replacing.

A great many of our touchpoints in daily life have been mechanically or electrically designed, installed and maintained by highly professional and well-trained engineers. They are the hidden heroes who increase and improve mobility and well-being for everyone.

The railways are no different. Across Britain, from track to train, in structures and on stations, there are literally thousands of engineered products and services that help to ensure the smooth running of trains and the network – keeping people on the move, comfortable and safe. Across the UK and beyond, there is a strong demand for skilled engineers able to span the mechanical and electrical (M&E) disciplines.

Railbusinessdaily caught up with one specialist M&E team whose innovative work across sectors has always been recognised as strong and robust. Orchestrated from its modern waterfront HQ, Hull-headquartered **Spencer Group** has delivered large-scale and challenging infrastructure projects across three decades. It offers mechanical and electrical engineering for all types of transportation buildings, structures and systems and industry projects – working in close collaboration with project teams and ensuring optimal integration of all systems.

The company is an experienced principal contractor in many sectors, including rail and bridges (over rail, roads and water). From designing and building new platforms to constructing whole stations and depots, the company has established an industry-wide reputation for successful delivery of innovative rail infrastructure projects.

**Spencer Group's** capabilities have seen the company build a team of multi-skilled and widely experienced M&E professionals who have positioned themselves at the forefront of key and innovative projects.

Depots at Neville Hill, Etches Park and Penzance, the Three Bridges Control Centre in Crawley, the new Ipswich Chord double track railway, transforming services for passengers at Cambridge Sidings and delivering the Stevenage Turnback Facility 12 months ahead of schedule, are all recent evidence of Spencer Group's M&E capabilities, delivering for clients that include Network Rail, East Midlands Railway, Govia Thameslink Railway, Bombardier/Alstom, Great Western Railway, Siemens and Northern.

### **Vast experience**

**Spencer Group's** large team of professional engineers and technicians have widespread experience in delivering complex M&E building services within offices, stations and trackside buildings. The company also specialises in new and refurbished stations, train servicing and maintenance depots and rail control centres, and also undertakes designs in HV, LV distribution and signalling supplies.

The combination of in-house M&E design with civils and building skills ensures that the business is able to cater for any client requirement and also places Spencer Group in a unique position to deliver significant efficiencies through Early Contractor Involvement (ECI).

Dan Whittle, Project Director at Spencer Group has, like many of his colleagues at the company, come of age within this family-owned business. He has risen through the ranks, starting his career in 2006 as an electrician, before moving on to Site Engineer, then M&E Project Manager before taking up his current role. He is in no doubt that continued investment in the company's M&E Services business and the people within it allows Spencer Group to maximise value, optimise cost and continually innovate for UK rail.

Dan said: "We are genuinely a turnkey business, right through from design and engineering to installation. There's nothing we can't do when it comes to M&E and, because we have in-house capabilities, we hold the baton on a project from beginning to end.

"We've developed a team that can, when it's required, stand on its own. We also enjoy really good relationships with sub-contractors and our supply chain, and this has been repeatedly proven with the work we deliver for clients.

“Our in-house design capabilities mean we can provide a wide-ranging set of specialisms for clients, everything from undertaking site surveys and all design stages from feasibility and approvals through to construction.”

Andy Freer is Spencer Group’s M&E Project Director, with a career in rail that has also included roles with NG Bailey, ABB Steward and Morrison Rail Services. He is in no doubt that the company does things differently.

“We never see problems, only challenges that we always rise to,” he said. “We are a ‘can-do’ business that offers great value to clients on complex projects. We build sustainable relationships with our clients, and I’d like to think they would echo our view that they can trust us, there are no corners cut and we keep them involved and updated constantly.

“We do have excellent in-house capabilities, but we don’t propose that everything we do has to be delivered internally. But that knowledge of M&E, the sustainable manner in which we’ve invested in our capabilities and team over the years, allows us to interrogate projects and to cope with changes that inevitably arise when our team is on site.”

Dan Whittle agrees that this brings huge benefits to clients. “Some businesses have to buy all of this expertise,” he explained, “but we’ve invested in M&E specialisms and that gives us the edge to ensure that we can work really effectively.

“Because of our range and experience of M&E, design and construction skills, we work hand in glove with our supply chain partners to make sure what we are all working towards delivering what is right for clients.”



## Ahead of schedule

Spencer Group's delivery of the 24-month, £30 million Stevenage Turnback Project a year ahead of schedule is strong evidence of how its collaborative approach works effectively. Essential to the success of the project was ECI with supply partners and the collaboration enjoyed between construction engineers and specialist civil, structural, mechanical and electrical design engineers.

Andy said: "We have a long history of successful delivery of ECI. At Stevenage, we had a multi-discipline team, all in one place, and it worked really well. Planners, commercial, telecoms and supply chain partners were all in the same room.

"The majority of the senior management team were Spencer Group people, but we were able to have direct communications with everyone involved. Having everyone co-located allows all parts of the process to come together and create, effectively, a Spencer Group business on site, making certain we could all deliver significant value.

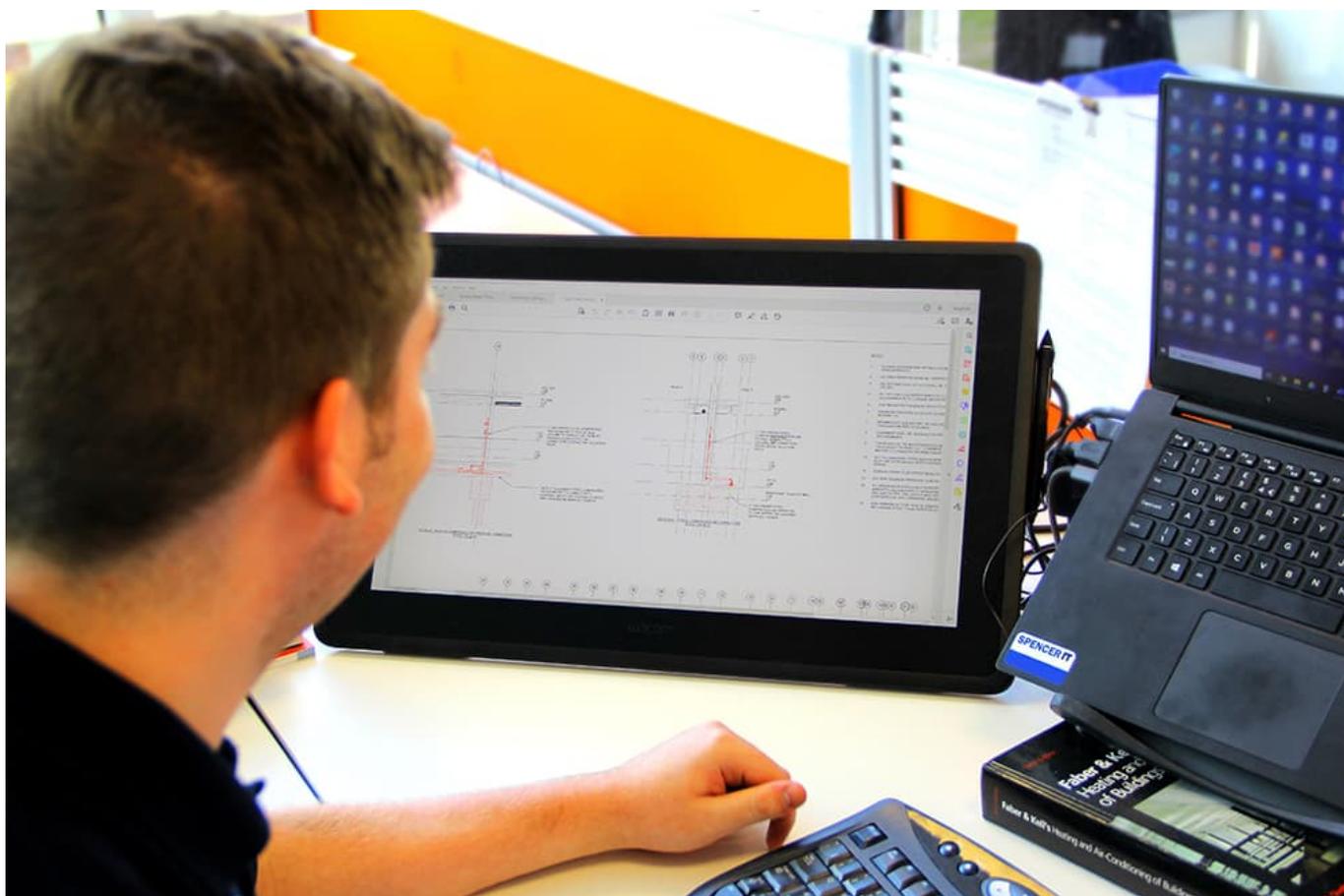
"At Stevenage, we all pulled together, which is what we actively encourage by leading by example, and that also results in clients being comfortable with our approach. Our supply chain partners came on the journey with us."

Clearly, Spencer Group's ambition is to continue to do what it does extremely well and invest further in

sustainable growth. Whether that is undertaking designs in HV, LV distribution and signalling supplies, providing in-house expertise in the various designs of 400V and 650V trackside power installations and for electric point heating installations, including all types of rail, points and crossing layouts, including third-rail locations, or using its 'one-stop-shop' philosophy to deliver rail depot solutions, the company is firmly positioned to deliver for UK rail.

The business also has ambitions to expand its capabilities in the future by increasing the number of apprenticeships it offers and adding to the experienced staff within its M&E Services team, as well as moving into other sectors.

Visit <https://thespencergroup.co.uk/> for more details.



*Photo credit: Spencer Group*