

## In the business of delivering

March 24, 2021



*SSE Enterprise MD Neil Kirkby on trust, changing lives and forming new alliances*

Neil Kirkby joined SSE Enterprise as Managing Director in January 2017. In common with every other company in the UK, COVID-19 has tested the mettle of Neil's leadership team but he sees a clear pathway to recovery.

The Contracting and Rail business had enjoyed three years of growth until COVID hit; so, the business is now working its way back towards pre-COVID levels of activity. Being part of SSE Group has meant that no member of Neil's workforce was furloughed, and he believes his business has weathered the COVID storm.

So, what about the road ahead for the business as things return to normal? Neil believes that as the nation gets properly back to business as usual this will increase marketplace competition which could create a trend for aggressive pricing.

But that goes hand in hand with increasing opportunities for growth because of the increasing spend on infrastructure projects as Britain 'builds back better.'

Neil explains: "There's no doubt that as COVID restrictions are eased and the UK gets back to work in a

more normal way the marketplace will feel more crowded with more competition. But I also believe there is a huge appetite from legislators to get major infrastructure projects fully firing on all cylinders again which will provide plenty of opportunities for players like ourselves.

“Post COVID, I’d expect clients to have a laser like focus on the costs of projects but aligned to that there will still be a need for workers with the right skills and experience to get the job done effectively.

“I feel comfortable with that because we can call upon a large pool of highly trained and multiskilled people who are ready and available.

“I also think that clients recognise that we put their business at the heart of what we do and that we work in a collaborative manner to deliver the most efficient solutions possible. Innovation is also key to driving down the cost of long-term infrastructure projects.”

### **Driving towards net zero and benefitting communities**

**SSE Enterprise Contracting** and Rail’s ongoing journey will see it supporting clients to achieve net zero carbon targets, as well as delivering on its own carbon footprint reduction targets.

The business is intent on supporting the communities they serve – including welcoming applications from those who lack traditional CVs or academic qualifications.

Neil said: “When we talk about social outcomes that includes rolling out apprenticeships, up-skilling employees, and providing tangible benefits to the local economy.

“But we want to go further than that because we’re committed to giving those from disadvantaged backgrounds genuine opportunities.

“We want to recruit people from as broad a talent pool as possible. So, if you’re someone who doesn’t have a traditional CV, we still want to hear from you because you could find your place in SSE. You provide the enthusiasm and the right attitude, and we’ll provide the training and the career opportunity.”

SSE Group is also a major partner for COP26 which comes to Glasgow this November; so, it’s no surprise that net zero matters to Contracting and Rail.

Neil adds: “Rail is being bold in its carbon zero ambitions. We can do the contracting activity for clients, but we can also give them support on their broader environmental journeys, and that’s really unique. Building client trust is our number one priority.”

### **At the heart of CP6**

18 months ago, **SSE Enterprise Contracting** and Rail enjoyed a significant number of CP6 contract wins. The business continues to deliver projects on a consistent basis. Its rail mechanical and electrical teams have almost 20 years’ experience of delivering projects to meet the growing demands of Britain’s rail infrastructure.

**SSE Enterprise Contracting** and Rail prides itself on its technical expertise and a no-compromise approach to safety.

Neil added: “The people in our business have delivered. They’ve worked night and day to put us in the position we’ve now got in the rail industry.

Over the last five years we’ve continued to grow, and we’ve got plenty to build on as we continue forwards.”

### **The power of three and a shared culture**

In joining forces with Arcadis and Linxon, Neil is confident that all three are entering the partnership with their eyes wide open to the challenges ahead.

He said: “I think the three of us coming together offers something really unique in the industry. If you look at the collective skills and the heritage, we all bring to the table – it’s an exciting prospect.

“One of the things I love about this consortium is the shared culture we have. We have already had some very honest, frank and open conversations. We can roll our sleeves up, get to the heart of the problem and egos are generally left at the door. That doesn’t always happen when businesses come together.

“We want to be a consortium that sits itself on the same side of the table as the client. These are world class businesses forming a consortium.

“The fact that they want to partner with us, and us with them, gives all three of us credence in terms of what we can collectively deliver.”

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