

Introducing SSE Enterprise – an exclusive interview with Neil Kirkby, MD

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HS2 will create thousands of contract opportunities in its supply chain, with work totalling billions of pounds.

SSE Enterprise has seen significant growth over recent years and is actively engaging in the HS2 opportunity as things start to take shape.

SSE Enterprise's Rail division specialises in the delivery of electrical and mechanical, HV and associated ancillary services across the UK.

In recent years the rail division of Enterprise can namecheck the likes of Network Rail, Transport for London and FirstGroup, as just a few of its satisfied customers.

Neil Kirkby has led SSE Enterprise as its Managing Director since 2017; a three-year period characterised by strong growth in the infrastructure and energy services sectors, including rail.

Neil's skills in both leadership and developing growth businesses have been at the heart of this success story. Neil's varied career to date includes a stint as a police officer in South Yorkshire and he has gone on to gain sector experience through roles at the Global Power Networks division of Balfour Beatty and Serco.

*Neil has spoken to **railbusinessdaily.com** about the opportunities with HS2 and highlighted why, he believes, SSE Enterprise has the right skills to support this kind of infrastructure activity.*

SSE Group is a UK-listed energy company with operations and investments across the UK and Ireland. It is primarily a developer (which includes being a builder), an operator and an owner of low-carbon energy assets and businesses. SSE Group is also a FTSE 35 company, which employs 12,000 staff and has an investment and capital expenditure programme worth £6bn to 2023.

Neil is the Managing Director of SSE Enterprise, which comprises three business units – providing distributed energy, mechanical and electrical contracting/rail and telecoms services to its client base, with a turnover of c£700m. The company works with both public and private sector organisations of all sizes to help them contribute towards a more sustainable future.

Neil explains that Enterprise aims to be at the forefront of the move towards a distributed energy system that puts clients in full control of their energy assets and usage.

Neil said: “Our distributed energy business aims to give energy users an active role in maintaining a low carbon, secure and affordable power system.

“We deliver a wide range of energy services and solutions that are data-driven and sustainable. These include distributed generation and storage, smart buildings, smart street lighting, EV charging, and energy as a service – which help to meet the growing appetite we see out there for smart places.

“Our vision is to help the UK towards its climate change targets and hit net zero by 2050. By adopting a ‘whole systems thinking’ approach, our distributed energy business is delivering the next generation of energy transport infrastructure, linking leading-edge technology and long-term investment to advance intelligent energy provision.

“SSE Enterprise Contracting and Rail is one of the largest M&E contracting businesses in the UK, offering a broad scope of mechanical, electrical and street lighting services, and working out of 50 regional offices/depots. We are trusted by our customers to deliver everything from the straightforward to highly complex energy infrastructure projects through a combination of innovation, collaboration and expertise.

“Our deep history of engineering excellence enables us to address strategic and ‘street level’ challenges, offering practical, safe and achievable solutions that are grounded in mechanical and electrical expertise.

“Our rail mechanical and electrical teams have over 15 years’ experience – delivering projects to meet the growing demands of Britain’s rail infrastructure. We pride ourselves on our technical expertise and our no-compromise approach to quality and safety.

“We specialise in the delivery of electrical and mechanical, HV and associated ancillary services across the UK. This is supported by 2,500 people with 24/7 365-day availability, provided by our dedicated planned preventative and reactive maintenance teams.

“Our experience in design management, construction, installation, commissioning, refurbishment and maintenance ensures our team delivers seamless and integrated solutions for project requirements.

“Our telecoms business [50% jointly owned with Infracapital] is one of the UK’s leading connectivity providers and operates a 12,000+km private telecoms network that spans the UK, offering a wide range of leading-edge products and integrated solutions. With over 20 years of industry knowledge and experience in telecoms, the business is well positioned to support with best-in-class connectivity and data centre services that deliver cost efficiencies as well as a competitive edge.

“The SSE Enterprise team is very excited by the opportunities that one of the UK’s biggest ever infrastructure projects will play in the UK economy. The values and behaviours of SSE Enterprise align very strongly with the objectives of HS2.

“The recent Covid-19 pandemic has tested the resolve of the country and SSE Enterprise is working hard to support its people and the wider business community. SSE Enterprise has not furloughed any of its employees.

“Our intent is to work with partners and develop strong propositions that align with rail industry wants and needs. These include the recruitment and selection of the strongest team possible, including a fantastic apprenticeship programme – uplifting the skill base in regions across the UK.”

Neil and his team have overseen considerable growth in SSE Enterprise Rail from £8m to circa £50m per annum with the company recently being awarded a Network Rail buildings and civils contract covering a number of routes – a framework valued at around £200m over a five-year period.

Neil concluded: “HS2 is a truly national endeavour. We hope to be one of the many companies across the country that will be in some way involved in supporting the HS2 project and we will be proud to do so.”