RailBusiness**Daily**

Network Rail partners with Thales to advance their digital ambitions in the UK

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Network Rail have entrusted Thales to develop and implement a new signalling communications system on the East Coast Main Line. The new system, known as an Online Key Management System (OKMS), will be trialled in late 2022, before it goes live in 2023. It will then be rolled out across the UK as part of Network Rail's long-term programme to transform the UK's rail system.

This advanced data security solution will play a key role in the safe and smooth running of a modernised rail network, by securing critical data exchange between trackside equipment and in-cab European Train Control Systems (ETCS) equipment. ETCS communicates safety critical information, such as train positioning between track and train, meaning that the trust and integrity of the transferred information is paramount.

The new Thales OKMS will build on proven offline key management technology that has been developed by Thales in the UK and Germany and deployed in both Poland and Israel.

However, this version will incorporate new innovative online connectivity, adding a greater level of automation. This will enable control keys and instructions to be issued more effectively than on current

networks, which rely on a human interface.

Thales's Customer Account Manager, Guy Cleall, said: "We have a long established relationship with Network Rail and we are delighted to be collaborating with them to deliver this innovative solution for such a strategic and important project."

Andy Bell, VP for Thales Ground Transportation Systems in the UK, added: "The online element of this solution is truly innovative, having not yet been implemented elsewhere in the world, meaning Network Rail will be leading the market in the new generation of systems. The Thales solution will be developed in both our cyber security development centres in Germany and closer to home in Thales's worldwide Digital Competence Centre (DCC), located in Manchester in the UK."

Thales will collaborate with Network Rail to deploy its extensive global cyber security experience from across multiple industries, such as energy, banking and aerospace to deliver a world leading OKMS for public key infrastructure.

Photo credit: Thales/Alamy