

PORR consortium wins £260 million HS2 modular track contract

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HS2 has awarded a major contract to design and manufacture the modular track system for the UK's new high speed railway, to a partnership which includes PORR UK Ltd and Aggregate Industries UK. The deal will see the slab track segments manufactured at a new factory near Shepton Mallet in Somerset helping to create up to 500 jobs over the life of the contract.

The deal - worth £260m - will see the PORR consortium manufacture all of the track (excluding tunnels and some specialist structures) between London and Crewe, where HS2 joins the existing west coast mainline.

Using a modular construction system known as Slab Track Austria, the concrete slab track will be manufactured offsite at a new purpose-built factory in Somerset before being transported to site. Once installed, the rails are then fitted onto the slab track.

This type of system - which is used on several high speed railways across the world - will reduce maintenance costs and improve performance in comparison to traditional ballasted track.

HS2 Ltd's Procurement and Commercial Director, David Poole said: "HS2 is designed to provide reliable high frequency, high capacity rail services for millions of people across the UK. Slab track will provide long-term value for money with lower maintenance costs and greater reliability and that's why I'm pleased that today we are awarding that contract to the PORR consortium.

"This award – and the announcement of the new factory at Somerset – is another example of how HS2 is already supporting companies across the UK, creating jobs and helping the economy recover from the coronavirus pandemic."

PORR is one of Austria's leading engineering companies and one of the first companies in the world to develop a slab track system. PORR's slab track system has been used to lay more than 780 kilometres of track worldwide – with its first stretch operating almost maintenance free since being laid in Langenlebern, Austria, in 1989.

Aggregate Industries UK is one of Britain's leading providers of construction materials, employing more than 3,700 people at 300 sites across the UK. The new factory is planned to be built at an existing Aggregate Industries site in Somerset.

Simon Jukes, Managing Director of PORR UK Ltd said: "The PORR Consortium is delighted to have the opportunity to contribute to this major contract and will bring a wealth of technical expertise and experience in high speed rail and slab track to the HS2 project. We are looking forward to working collaboratively with the HS2 team to deliver a world class sustainable rail infrastructure for the United Kingdom."

A separate Track Systems contractor – due to be appointed in 2022 – will have overall responsibility for managing and coordinating the design and installation of the complex rail systems in each section of the route. This includes the installation of the slab track manufactured by the PORR consortium and the interface with signalling and overhead power supply.

Separate specialist contractors will also deliver the rails, switches and crossings, high voltage power supply, communications and mechanical and electrical systems.

Photo credit: HS2 Ltd

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