

SWGR – Something to feel good about

June 18, 2021



Well-being in the SWGR workplace has never been more important

Having a people culture and well-being strategy is no longer a 'nice to do' in any organisation – it is business critical.

Under newly refreshed leadership, the team at national rail specialist SWGR has been working hard throughout 2020-21 to change and shape the culture of the 30 year old business – placing its people at the centre of everything it does and recognising and promoting the fact that the individuals in its teams, its supply chain partners and the extended rail family are most important when it comes to achieving a successful, happy and prosperous place to work. The team is absolutely clear that 'a happy, safe and supported frontline colleagues is a productive and value-adding member of the team'.

SWGR has successfully operated on major projects UK-wide and overseas across five decades. A major supplier of specialist frontline labour, industry training, occupational health and PPE, the business has delivered more than 15 million safe person hours on rail projects the length and breadth of the country.



The company does not believe that a caring culture should ever be viewed as “optional”, that instead it must be seen as absolutely “necessary” and at the forefront of any overarching business strategy, impacting everything from marketing to business growth and talent retention. SWGR has a ‘proactive prevention is better than cure’ mentality and its approach is yielding so much more – especially when it comes to investing in safety and mental well-being.

Raj Sinha, Group MD at SWGR, said: “Rail industry leaders can make a real, tangible difference, first to their people, the industry and to the economy as a whole. We cannot sit around and wait for someone else to make things better. We all have a responsibility to do the right things for those in our extended family. Starting with our people we must focus on safety and well-being. This undoubtedly has a positive ripple effect throughout the rail sector and more widely across society. The work we are doing here at SWGR is certainly making a positive difference.”

‘Safe Together’ philosophy

It is a game entry requirement that any business working in the rail industry must demonstrate a commitment and track record for delivering safely and delivering well. It is the golden thread that must run through every aspect of a company’s operations and a great many in the industry are known to do these things very well. At SWGR, however, it is how the business has implemented innovative safety processes that is making it stand out from the crowd and ensuring, most importantly, that anyone associated with the business’ work arrives home safely every day.

While the amount of workforce major and minor injuries on the UK rail network have fallen to their lowest levels since 2007/08, according to the Office of Rail and Road (ORR), rail industry companies need to continually innovate to push this figure down further – increasing safety in every aspect of the work environment.

SWGR has investment significantly by analysing data and information, using predictive safety models and implementing safety initiatives which enhance the working environment and work towards reducing potential incidents. The aim is to be a great and safe place to work so that the company is always a great and safe place to do business with and its efforts are certainly beginning to pay off.



Under a refreshed and innovative campaign launched in 2020, SWGR's Safe Together has introduced processes and opportunities to not only improve safety and well-being for its frontline colleagues, but for supply chain partners and client colleagues as well. The positive results of bringing industry organisations closer together are starting to show and industry experts and leaders are now beginning to look closely at the SWGR model, which is viewed as a point of difference in a world that is often cited as being set in its ways – lacking in invention and innovation. Described by industry commentators as 'original', 'unexpected', 'fresh' and 'creative', SWGR's Safe Together campaign is certainly adding value and it is beginning to turn heads across UK rail.

Raj continued: "For 30 years, we have continued to reinvent ourselves through innovation and forward-thinking approaches – often leading the industry with our approach. It is important to keep ahead and try

and find new ways of doing things otherwise organisations can get lost in the crowd, or worse, they wither away. For us, complacency is not an option. We will continue to grasp the forces that drive change – particularly when it comes to the safety and well-being of our people.”

Occupational health and safety

SWGR recognises that occupational health and safety is fundamental when it comes to safeguarding the lives of its people. The company is taking major steps in ensuring that the health, safety and welfare of its people are well-taken care of. The team has worked tirelessly to understand and analyse any hazards that are associated with all workplace activities and has taken precautionary measures to make sure that people are healthy, motivated and safe in their work.

“We are one of the first rail companies in the UK to introduce the concept of an occupational health nurse on the frontline,” said SWGR’s Head of HSQE, Kevin Boyle, who is spearheading the Safe Together campaign. “We recognise that, while Occupational Health checks had always been available to our teams for free, we could push the boundaries and greatly improve access by taking these services to where our teams, our clients and our suppliers were working on a regular basis in mobile health, safety and wellbeing units. This not only includes physical checks, but we also provide mental health support as part of this as well.

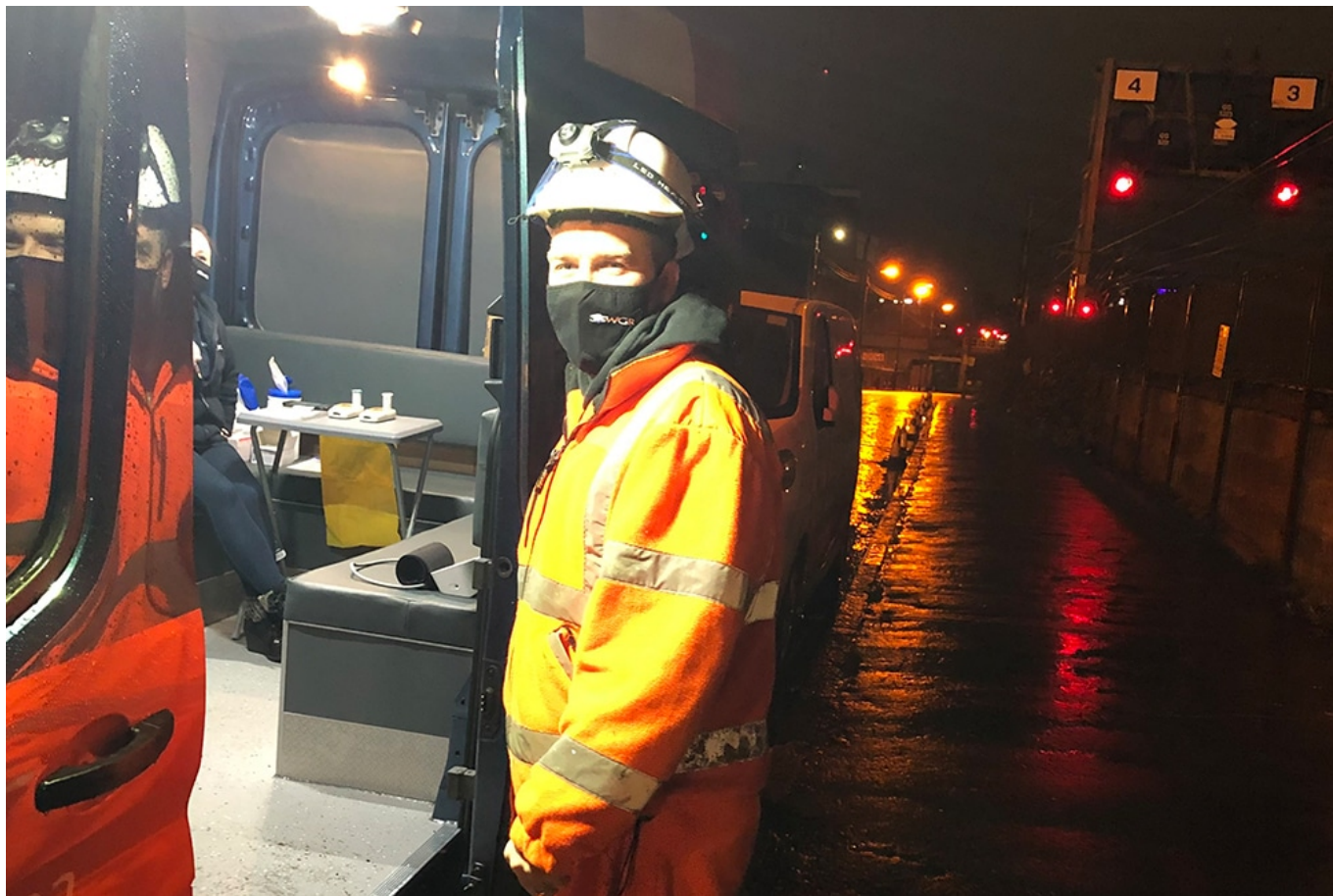
“By introducing this service to our frontlines, we can ensure that absolutely everyone, from our colleagues, through to supply chain partner and client colleagues, has the facilities available to ensure they are supported to deliver safely. We can also provide them with any essential support they need.

“Considering the events of the last year, people are taking their health more seriously than ever before. Over this period of time, the uptake of health checks available through these units has been significant.”



SWGR has invested in a fleet of mobile health, safety and wellbeing units to increase access to these services for all. The units are also complemented with a direct communication link between the site and SWGR's 24/7/365 control centre, improving the ability to provide digital briefings to the team before starting work on site.

The services provided include health screening and surveillance programmes; diagnosis, prevention and recommended treatment for conditions identified; pre-placement and periodic return-to-work examinations; independent medical examinations; impairment evaluations; disability and case management; drug testing; and behavioural and emotional counselling to avoid any effect on job performance. These simple but effective improvements are increasing competitiveness and motivating the team - underscoring SWGR's desire to be that great and caring place to work for.



Using technology to inform, engage and act

Built into SWGR's safety infrastructure is its WorkSafe app, which provides support to colleagues from the moment they leave the house to go to site through to leaving site and arriving at home at the end of their shift.

Kevin said: "Apps are becoming a huge component of any company's safety infrastructure as they are a very useful tool in consistently communicating safety messages to all colleagues instantly, while being an important mechanism to help our colleagues work with our management team to support close call investigations in real time.

"Our WorkSafe app does more than this though. We recognise the importance of fatigue management in the rail industry, and, while there are measurements in place to ensure that we can monitor fatigue, we needed something that helped us to manage this too and act if necessary.

"The WorkSafe app provides a live communication stream to our control centre during any commute to ensure our frontline colleagues get to site safely. On arrival to site, we dynamically risk assess our frontline colleagues through four safety questions to ensure the mind is focused on the job ahead.

"If they give an incorrect answer to any of these questions, we have a direct link between the colleague, their supervisor and the control centre to determine whether they are fit to work, both mentally and from a

fatigue point of view.



“We’ve done this because we recognise that fatigue and the frame of mind of a person are two major contributing factors towards the cause of incidents on the railway. Where we can provide support and make sure our colleagues are ready to work, we have put procedures in place.

“This is about greatly improving safety communication across our business. We do this so we are consistent in how we act at all times – while being immediately available to speak and respond, wherever we are working in the UK.

“We need our teams to be able to speak to each other wherever they are in the country. By putting an immense focus on providing more communications channels to make it easier for everyone, our teams have access to the wider knowledge and experience of the business too.”

Ongoing training and mentoring through the SWGR academy

Both the introduction of the mobile health, safety and wellbeing units and the app are just some of the components SWGR has introduced to ensure safety at every step of its working day.

While SWGR’s digitalisation programme is essential to this, the team is also upskilling its colleagues through a Human Behavioural Academy – part of sister company and training provider, Scot-Train.

The Human Behavioural Academy focuses on some of the non-technical skills colleagues need to work on the railway, focusing on dealing with motivation, behaviour and leadership.

“While we can greatly improve how our colleagues communicate through digital means, we also need to arm our supervisors with the skills they need to lead their teams in all situations,” said Kevin. “From what we have learned from industry issues, reinforcing the right behaviours and mindset in our team is essential in keeping everyone safe together.

“We’ve spent a lot of time to understand industry issues and how we can make what we do better. We know that, thanks to the advancement of technology, further digitalising what we do and how we do it will push the boundaries of what is achievable when it comes to safety management. Couple that with a team that lives and breathes the SWGR culture and demonstrates the right behaviours means that we can greatly reduce the chance of an incident.

“Safe Together underpins how SWGR conducts itself from a safety perspective and demonstrates this culture. Ultimately, what we are doing now helps to make sure that everyone is home safe every day.”

Summary

SWGR’s philosophy is that health, safety and well-being needs to be at the heart of what the business does – a central theme that runs through every task, every activity and always at the forefront of people’s minds. Constantly evolving and innovating has become part of the way that the team lives and works. SWGR continues to change, for the better; if the recent past has been very good, the future promises to be superb!