

Tom Smith: The new energy leading SSE Enterprise Rail

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When SSE Enterprise Rail was launched five years ago the vision was to become the rail industry's power partner of choice.

The decision to launch the rail division was to build on over 15 years' experience working on and delivering projects to meet the growing demand of Britain's railway infrastructure.

Since then it's gone from strength to strength with an average of 100 active projects a week.

During this time its abilities in power infrastructure solutions hasn't gone unnoticed, with the likes of Network Rail, Transport for London, East Midlands Trains, First Great Western and South West Trains all onboard with SSE Enterprise Rail.

At the heart of the success has been Tom Smith who, three years ago, was recruited as the Business Development Manager to build relationships with London Underground Limited by exposing the business to SSE Enterprise's rail offer.

His efforts in transforming the rail division have been rewarded with a promotion to rail director. He replaces Raj Sinha, whose rise in the company will see him take on a non-executive director role, working on major contracts. Raj had overseen growth in SSE Enterprise Rail from £8m to £50m per annum with the company recently being awarded a buildings and civil's contract in the Wales and Western region – a framework valued at around £200m over a five year period.

Ahead of starting his role as rail director Tom has spoken with railbusinessdaily.com about his plans to accelerate ahead in the market.

“When I joined SSE Enterprise Rail three years ago it was because I wanted to be involved in a business with huge potential,” he said.

“Since then the rail business really has gone from strength to strength.

“It is exciting to be playing such an important role in helping the millions of customers who travel on Britain's railways and the freight users moving hundreds of thousands of tonnes of goods.

“With this comes a great opportunity to create a system that operates safely, reliably and positively – a philosophy that we take into every job that we are asked to deliver.

“Our ongoing growth and success is down to our three core values of safety, expertise and collaboration. The importance we place on these three values is the reason the rail industry now turns to us when it comes to powering Britain's railways.

“In the last few years we have carried out planned and reactive maintenance on hundreds of thousands of assets and have had no RIDDOR incidents on our Pre-planned Preventative Maintenance (PPM) contracts and we consistently exceed our agreed Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

“This is something I want to build on and really highlight in my new role. We have been doing the hard work for several years without really shouting out about it. Now is the time to do that and with the level of investment, and long-term partnerships we are securing, we need to be seen as a true alternative in the industry.”

Tom brings a wealth of experience to the role. He has over 14 years' experience in the rail industry working across North Western Railway, Transport for London and London Underground, to name but a few.

He has in-depth knowledge around line-side and station refurbishments, including large-scale infrastructure projects, and his skills include project and programme management.

Prior to this he spent 18 years with telecoms giant British Telecoms (BT), where he looked after three groups within the business, and before that an MD at an SME specialising in electrical and telecoms installations.

“We have exceptional experience in delivering rail maintenance projects and between us all there will probably be very few major UK rail projects that we haven't been involved with,” he said.

“Another important part of the company’s success is our investment in training our people. We reward them well, we look after them, and we retain them.”

Coronavirus aside, Tom has some solid foundations in his new job. Among the long list of high-profile contracts, SSE Enterprise has just entered the second of a five-year programme of works under Network Rail’s building and civils framework. The combined potential value of the works awarded to the company is more than £200m

Tom said: “This five-year programme was great news for our reputation as a company and really highlighted our credentials to the whole industry.

“It underscores the team’s exceptional skills and capabilities and our exclusive geographical presence in UK rail – with more than 2,500 people available across dozens of office and depot locations UK-wide. SSE, a FTSE 30 company, employs more than 20,000 people UK-wide and operates from more than 150 points nationwide – our capacity and reach is phenomenal and we are ideally placed to support the likes of Network Rail, Transport for London, HS2 and others, including working with other principal contractors.

“Delivering this huge programme of works continues to go well and I feel that more organisations are starting to notice who we are and what we do – especially our ability to deliver safely, on time, and to a high standard.

“Although Coronavirus is making life very challenging for everyone, I am incredibly optimistic about the future of SSE Enterprise.

“CP6 marks the biggest investment in the railways since the Victorian era. After a year of planning, I feel that once we get to the other side of Coronavirus, it really will be an exciting and prosperous future for the company. In the meantime, we will adapt and adopt new working methods to safely live with it.

“There are some strong opportunities on the horizon and the opportunity for me and the rest of the team is to demonstrate how we can work collaboratively to identify and deliver value-adding solutions through initiatives such as asset and project funding, asset ownership and alliances with the leading organisations in the rail industry.

“It has never been more important for the systems powering the railways to be effective, reliable and well maintained. Any work needed to be done has to be done safely and efficiently with minimum disruption. That is what we do at SSE Enterprise with our track record and ever growing list of high-profile clients proving that it is something that we do well.”

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