

Triple triumph for Network Rail at prestigious South West engineering awards

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Network Rail has scooped three awards at the Institute of Civil Engineers (ICE) South West Civil Engineering Awards 2022.

The reopening of the Dartmoor Line and replacement of the Ocean Canal bridge in Stroud were recognised with three awards at the ICE South West Civil Engineering Awards in association with Kier BAM, which are held annually to recognise achievement among regional engineers and project teams

Ten project and two individual accolades were presented at the gala awards ceremony which was held last night in Bristol in front of a 300-strong audience from the region's engineering and infrastructure sector.

Double delight for the Dartmoor Line

Network Rail's project to reopen the Dartmoor Line, in partnership with GWR and Devon County Council, was twice recognised, winning the prestigious Showcase Award as well as the Community Award in recognition of outstanding community engagement and the benefits it brings to rural communities on Dartmoor.

The Dartmoor Line reopened to regular passenger services last November for the first time in nearly 50 years following over £40 million of Government investment.

This mothballed former freight railway line, which runs between Okehampton and Exeter, was restored in just nine months and delivered £10 million under budget becoming the first former line to reopen under the Government's Restoring Your Railway programme. This was made possible by Network Rail's team of engineers who worked tirelessly to deliver a huge programme of work including laying 11 miles of new track and installing 24,000 concrete sleepers and 29,000 tonnes of ballast in a record-breaking 20-day period.

The Dartmoor Line, which on Sunday 20 November celebrated its one-year anniversary since reopening to regular passenger services, has also been highlighted as a good example of investment in low-carbon infrastructure in a new report by ICE on the financing of green infrastructure projects.

Ocean Canal bridge replacement

Network Rail's work on behalf of the Cotswolds Canals Connected Project to replace the railway bridge over the canal at the Ocean in Stonehouse, Gloucestershire, was named winner of the Under £8 million New Build Award, sponsored by Cormac.

Network Rail's team of engineers worked night and day between 24 December 2021 and 1 January 2022 to complete this project on time, as part of the Cotswold Canals Connected Project's plans to restore four miles of canal between Stonehouse and Saul Junction.

The replacement of the bridge reinstated a navigable channel for boats to pass under the railway and the wider towpath enables better access for cyclists and walkers.

Stuart Calvert, Network Rail Wales and Western capital delivery director, said: "I am delighted for everyone involved that our Dartmoor Line and Ocean Canal bridge projects have been recognised at this year's prestigious Institute of Civil Engineers (ICE) South West Civil Engineering Awards.

"The reopening of the much-anticipated Dartmoor line has been a revelation for the town of Okehampton and other nearby communities, supporting greater connectivity, boosting local businesses, the tourism sector, and provide greater access to education and work for thousands of people who live locally.

"I am equally pleased that our work to replace the railway bridge at the Ocean in Stonehouse has also been recognised. Our team worked tirelessly over the last festive period to complete this important upgrade which will help ensure we continue to run a safe and reliable railway for years to come, not forgetting also enabling boats to pass through the canal at the Ocean in Stonehouse for the first time in many years."

Sally Walters, chair of judges, said: "The Dartmoor Line is an inspirational example of what can happen when civil engineers and communities work together. The project shows how infrastructure can improve connectivity for rural areas and how quickly improvements can be delivered for everyone's benefit. What's more, the scheme has created a template for the successful restoration of other disused railways across

the UK. Congratulations to all involved with this outstanding scheme.”

Miranda Housden, ICE South West regional director, said: “This year’s awards showcase the challenging work undertaken by civil engineers for the benefit of regional communities. The project winners demonstrate how social value, economic growth, climate resilience and inclusivity can be unlocked through excellence and innovation in the design, construction and implementation of infrastructure schemes.

“The awards confirm that the South West is building for the future by investing in the new talent we need to help the region thrive in the years to come. All our winners and finalists should be very proud of what they are achieving and the contribution they are making to the South West.”

Full details of all the shortlisted projects and awards sponsors are available at www.ice.org.uk/sw/awards.