

UK organisations celebrate success at the Global Light Rail Awards

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The Blackpool Tramway has won the award for the Most Improved System in 2020/21.

The award, presented at the Honourable Artillery Company in London on Wednesday 6th October, celebrates and rewards the most outstanding contributor to the Global Light Rail industry.

The Most Improved System award recognises those operators and networks that have made the biggest steps forward over the last 12 months to deliver excellence within the Light Rail industry.

Blackpool Trams have seen a resurgence in customer numbers over recent months, often carrying more customers than normal when compared with figures prior to COVID-19. The Blackpool staycation boom, coupled with seamless ticketing and low fares are being labelled as the reasons for Blackpools positive return to normality.

A recent customer on Blackpool Trams said they are always clean, run regularly and the staff were always helpful.

Ian Middlemiss, Head of Tramway at Blackpool Transport said “I’m proud to have accepted this award on behalf of the efforts of every single member of our team. The challenges and adversity we have faced have been matched with enthusiasm and desire to continue to offer an amazing service for our customers and I’m delighted that our collective efforts have been rewarded.”

Jane Cole, Managing Director at Blackpool Transport added “Blackpool is deservedly being recognised on a global scale for its efforts in recovering from the Covid-19 pandemic in true Blackpool style. We have a world-class tramway system here and we’re delighted that customers are trusting us to return to their normal daily lives using our services.”

Contactless payments are set to be introduced on Blackpool Trams in the coming weeks to further improve the accessibility and customer experience for its customers. In 2022, the Tramway extension is set to complete which will provide an integrated train, tram and bus network for Blackpool.

UKTram scoops accolades at Global Light Rail Awards

Meanwhile UKTram and the organisation responsible for light rail safety have scooped a series of prestigious accolades at the high-profile event celebrating excellence across the sector.

Between them, the Light Rail Safety and Standards Board and UKTram were ‘Highly Commended’ in four categories at the Global Light Rail Awards, with a senior figure within both organisations receiving a Judges’ Special Award.

Mike Mabey, Chair of the UKTram Operators Group and an LRSSB Board member, is standing down from both roles at the end of this month when he retires after 30 years of working in light rail. He joined the sector after leaving the army – where he served with the Royal Engineers – rising through the ranks at Manchester Metrolink before moving to Keolis Nottingham in 2014 to become Head of Operations.

James Hammett, UKTram Managing Director, commented: “For many years Mike has been a staunch supporter of the work done by UKTram, most recently as chair of our Operators Group.

“Mike thoroughly deserves this recognition. His experience and willingness to share what he has learned has been invaluable in helping to share best practice across the sector. At the same time, he has always been a pleasure to work with, and his enthusiasm has been an inspiration to us all. We wish him all the best in his retirement.”

Carl Williams, LRSSB Chief Executive, said: “Mike’s knowledge of all aspects of tramway operations is second to none, and he has played an important role in shaping the development of the LRSSB.

“On a personal level, I first met Mike at Manchester Metrolink and feel proud to have worked alongside him. He deserves a huge thank you for his support and contributions to further improving light rail safety.”

At an award event in London last night (Wednesday, October 6), the LRSSB was also recognised in the Significant Safety Initiative category for its work on a sector-wide risk management framework, and a project to develop an online reference library received a similar accolade for Technical Innovation.

The UKTram team was also highly commended for its work to support the sector during the pandemic while a joint project with Edinburgh Trams that's revolutionising authority-to-work processes was also recognised in the Technical Innovation category.

James Hammett added: "To receive commendations in these categories is testament to the hard work of everyone at UKTram and the LRSSB and their commitment to finding innovative solutions to the challenges faced by members, promoting light rail and driving sector safety standards."

Tyne and Wear Metro award for response to the pandemic

Tyne and Wear Metro employees are celebrating winning an international award for their response to the pandemic, and efforts to welcome back customers as restrictions ease.

Metro was named winner of the Best Customer Initiative at the prestigious Global Light Rail Awards in London, up against tram and urban transit systems from many countries.

The award recognises the efforts Metro's teams made to keep customers feeling safe and reassured during the pandemic, and then welcome people back with bold initiatives including its Take The Kids For Free family promise.

Nexus, the public body which runs Metro, won a second prize at the awards for the Best Technical Innovation in Rolling Stock.

The award celebrates the success of Nexus's biggest ever public consultation, in which 23,000 customers took part in VR-augmented and interactive online activities, becoming part of the train design process to a degree never seen before in the rail industry.

Cllr Carl Johnson, Chair of the Tyne and Wear Sub Committee of the North East Joint Transport Committee, paid tribute to the dedication of Metro's employees.

He said: "Metro's employees, like many other public transport staff and key workers, have shown amazing dedication through the last 18 months.

"It is a huge accolade for Metro's frontline heroes, for Metro itself and our whole region to be recognised at the Global Light Rail Awards alongside cities from across the world."

Chief Operating Officer at Nexus, Martin Kearney, said: "These two awards are nothing less than the team at Nexus and Metro deserve for the care and commitment they have shown to our customers.

"Customers have come back to Metro faster than on any other UK rail network because they feel happy and confident to travel with us.

"Local people are again making up to 100,000 journeys every day by our clean, green public transport and that is testament to the hard work and innovation of so many people at Nexus over the last year and a half."

Nexus' consultation on the interior design for its £362m new trains in autumn 2020 saw 23,000 people take part in a mix of online events, interactive web consultations and VR-augmented live visits focussed on disabled users.

The record consultation was organised with the expertise of train manufacturer Stadler and expert researchers from Newcastle University's Open Lab digital civics department.

The input of Metro customers shaped significant changes to the final design of new trains, which will enter servicers in 2023, including the addition of more seats and changes to handholds, bike storage and wheelchairs areas.

The Global Light Rail Awards, held in London, marked the second big success of the week for Nexus. On Tuesday it won three Gold awards and one Silver Award at the Chartered Institute of Public Relations' North East Pride ceremony.

Nexus was named the winner for Regional Campaign of the Year, Best Use of Content and Best Use of Digital and Social Media. It was runner up in the Best Public Sector Campaign category.

Photo credit: Blackpool Tramway