

146 people Stay Connected at BCRRE/Network Rail SME Webinar

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Network Rail's Commercial Director for the North West and Central Region says she is trying to bring about change when it comes to working with the supply chain.

Denise Wetton was one of several high-profile speakers at the [Birmingham Centre for Railway Research and Education's](#) (BCRRE) Stay Connected event. It was sponsored by [Sopra Steria's Competency Training Marketplace \(CTM\)](#).

She said: "If we go back through past control periods certain parts of the industry did not perhaps collaborate as well as they might and that is why we are focusing much more closely on working in full co-operation with the industry supply chain.

"To deliver safely, deliver performance and deliver the basics brilliantly, we absolutely have to deliver it together. To achieve that, we are embarking on a commercial transformation in how we engage with supply chain partners and how we can be more open and more transparent, specifically as we conclude our work in CP6 and head towards CP7.

“As part of this we will be launching a range of new opportunities – our new frameworks across all of North West and Central with billions of pounds worth of contracts and so my team and myself are really working hard on refocusing our relationships and changing that supply chain model to really maximise the collaborative benefit and industry efficiency.”

The free webinar, which was attended by rail industry principal contractors, supply chain organisations, train companies and freight operators, was headlined by Tim Shoveller, Managing Director for Network Rail’s North West and Central Region.

As well as giving an update on what is happening in his region, he discussed the importance of competency and training across the rail industry.

He said: “Workforce safety is something that we need to be on top of at all times and needs to continuously improve – certainly in terms of reducing the risk of injuries to anyone who comes into contact with any aspect of an operational railway. This isn’t a nice to do, it is a need to do and a game entry requirement for anyone who has a desire to work on Britain’s railways. Good training and competency management are essential ingredients to success.

“In tandem, we need to improve performance and punctuality for passenger and freight customers. It is our job to bring it all together and together, with our supply chain partners, we will deliver a great service.

“Great British Railways, the Williams-Shapps Plan For Rail, is what I have been waiting for for 10 years and it is really exciting now that we are moving forward with a clearer vision that will support the transformation of the industry.”

Part of Tim and Denise’s vision for the North West and Central Region has been setting up a *Dragon’s Den*-style event where businesses present ideas that will take rail forward in innovative, affordable ways. “Our job then, in Network Rail, is to work with our engineers and our central team to look at whether we can support a quick way to market and a seamless way into the railway.” Denise said.

This initiative was welcomed by Craig Purcell, Managing Director of Fenix Rail Systems. Fenix is the sole provider of Tie-FenLock Depot Control systems in the UK, which are designed to allow trains to safely move around their facilities – quicker, more easily and using a single operator. Because every facility is different, Fenix has developed a bespoke technical interface that can be integrated with all UK-based mainline interlockings.

Craig explained that Fenix uses the CTM platform to manage both its training and competency requirements and that this is making a huge difference to business efficiency and work-winning opportunities. He said that the system was a ‘massive differentiator’ in workforce planning terms and in PQQs and tender opportunities.

Craig welcomed the attempts to unlock further face-to-face collaboration between Network Rail and businesses. He said that this was exactly what SMEs wanted and needed – a professional stage to show how they can perform.

He said bringing fresh technology to market for SMEs involves “knocking on doors and trying to make a breakthrough”. Having a practical starting point from which they could demonstrate installed technology – in Fenix’s case at Banbury Depot, completed about six years ago – was utterly crucial. “From then on we had a base,” he said. “We had somewhere we could go to show the system working.

“With the business case and the studies we’ve done so far – and with the response we’ve had – we are now breaking through big time.”

The webinar also included a demonstration of Sopra Steria’s CTM platform. CTM is an easy-to-use, one-stop shop allowing organisations in complex regulatory environments to book staff training and manage their competencies to keep their workforce fully operational.

For more information please visit: <https://competencytrainingmarketplace.com/>

Photo credit: Network Rail